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ABSTRACT

A college that uses students as tutors in a reading/study skills lab originally did its training through individual assistance. Tutors were encouraged to complete at least one lesson from each of the textbooks, kits, and programs. A few workshops were held to give an overview of equipment, materials, and strategies. Increased enrollment in the lab meant that a more extensive tutor training program was needed. After criteria for tutor selection were established, a course was developed that included lectures, reading, discussion, and projects. Eventually, an alternative course was developed on videocassettes. This allowed flexibility in permitting tutors to begin any time during the semester and to learn at their own pace. A major drawback is that the course does not afford opportunities for questions and discussion. (A syllabus of the course and a description of the training modules is included.) (TJ)

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A VIDEOCASSETTE MASTERY LEARNING TUTOR TRAINING COURSE

by June Dempsey
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an address delivered at the Western College Reading Association's Annual Conference, Honolulu, April 10, 1979

One of the major concerns in establishing and maintaining a program of learning assistance is the selection and training of the tutoring staff. The criteria for selecting tutors, the content of the training program and the best methods of training are decisions that directors of learning assistance programs should be resolved before the program gets underway. However, just as curriculum offerings must change to meet the needs of the population served, so must the tutor training program adjust to staff and student needs.

When the learning assistance program was started at San Joaquin Delta College (Stockton, California) ten years ago, it included only a reading/study skills lab and a writing lab. Tutors were selected from students referred by other English instructors and by the work placement office.

Most of the training was on-the-job training in the form

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of individual assistance and advice from paraprofessionals and instructors. Tutors assigned to the reading/study skills lab were encouraged to complete at least one lesson from each of the textbooks, kits and programs. A few workshops were held during the first weeks of each semester to provide an overview of equipment, materials and strategies.

Enrollment increases due to the addition of more developmental reading courses, an English as a second language lab and related courses meant that more tutors were required. As a result, it was clear that a more extensive and efficacious tutor training program was needed.

The first step was to decide on the criteria for tutor selection. The following requirements were established for students who wished to tutor in the lab:

(1) An A or B in English 1A or an equivalent course;

(2) Recommendations by two instructors;

(3) Fluency in reading and writing English:

  (a) Pass a reading test (Nelson-Denny) with an acceptable score (11th grade reading level for tutors for whom English is a second language and a 13th grade reading level for all others).

  (b) Write an essay demonstrating proficiency in terms of content, organization and grammar.

(4) An interest in helping others acquire proficiency in English. (Assessed during an interview with the instructor.)

The next step was to plan the course.

The course was scheduled to meet twice a week for lectures,

discussions and demonstrations of materials, equipment and methods. In addition, every tutor enrolled in the course was required to work in one of the labs at least three hours per week and encouraged to work as many as fifteen hours per week. Students were paid for their required three hours per week as well as for additional hours.

Students enrolled in the tutor training course entitled English 32 Seminar in Communications: The Nature and Process of Reading had several other requirements. These were described to students on the course information sheet distributed the first day of class.

The first few class lectures were designed to orient the students to the philosophy of the learning assistance program. The class organization followed this format:

(1) Assigned readings dealing with the topic.

(2) Lecture-discussion on the skill or topic.

(3) Demonstrations of lab equipment and materials.

(4) Demonstrations of effective tutoring methods.

(5) Evaluation of methods, discussion of problems and suggestions for improvement

Subsequent topics or skills followed the same format.

The class was usually divided into groups of three or four students for demonstrations and discussions. This enabled each one to have a "hands-on" experience with the equipment and material. The intermix technique was frequently employed: one student was selected after the demonstration was over to explain the material and/or equipment to the next group. This technique

usually ensured students' concentration and interest in learning how to use the material and/or equipment.

One may wonder why an alternative to this approach to tutor training was needed. There were several reasons: first, not all tutors could attend the lectures at the scheduled times; second, some students didn't find out about the tutoring opportunity until the semester was well underway; third, some students were absent from important lectures or demonstrations; and, finally, tutor attrition and population increases caused a continuous need for adding tutors during the semester.

Therefore, a staff development proposal was written requesting funds for the development of a videocassette mastery learning alternative to the lecture-lab course. It was planned that the videocassettes could also be used by students who were absent from a particular lecture or those who needed to hear the lecture again in order to fully comprehend the concepts.

The criteria for selection and the course requirements remained essentially the same. There were only a few differences: the lectures were on videocassette; no discussions or demonstrations could take place; and students could not progress to a new topic or skill until the previous one was mastered. The information sheet describing the course requirements is presented below:

ENGLISH 32 SEMINAR IN COMMUNICATIONS:
THE NATURE AND PROCESS OF READING

CREDIT: 3 units

INSTRUCTOR: June Dempsey

TEXTBOOKS: Trela, Thaddeus, 14 Remedial Reading Techniques
Dempsey, June, Videocassette Modules for English 32

PREREQUISITES:
1. An A or B in English 1A or 1B.
2. Above 11th grade reading level on a standardized reading test.
3. Recommendations from two Delta instructors.
4. Enrollment in 12 or more units at Delta.
5. Fluency in English as demonstrated in an interview and in an essay.

ATTENDANCE (TBA):
1. Tutor at least 3 hours per week.
2. Arrange to view the videocassette modular lessons.
3. Attend lab staff meetings every Friday, 12:30 pm to 1:20 pm.
4. Meet with instructor individually as scheduled.

REQUIREMENTS:
1. View the videocassettes and study the materials in the modules.
2. Maintain a journal of your lab activities. Indicate your experiences in diagnosis, instruction (group and individual), practice and evaluation. Include samples of students' work done under your direction.
3. Prepare a written critique of a program in each of the following skills areas:
   a. Beginning Reading (ESL)
   b. Word Attack
   c. Vocabulary
   d. Comprehension
   e. Study Skills
4. Prepare a skills paper on one of the reading skills listed on the Reading Skills Chart according to the format below:
   --Part I: Define the skill. You should footnote your dictionary. Do not use the dictionary for your definition.

--Part II: List the lab materials that help a student learn and practice this skill.
--Part III: Describe how you would help a student learn and practice this skill. Tell what you would do as a tutor.

--OR--

Prepare materials that would benefit students in the lab. Consult with instructor before beginning this project.

5. Read the Trela text.
6. Schedule two conferences with the instructor during the semester: one within the first six weeks of the semester and one within the last two weeks of the semester.

GRADING:

Your grade in this course will depend on:

1. Lab work based on your attitude, initiative and knowledge.
2. Lab journal.
3. A skill paper or project.
4. Five critiques.
5. Attendance (lab periods)
6. Completion of the videocassette modules.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE:

As a result of your time and effort in this course, you should:

1. Become acquainted with reading and study skills.
2. Know the various materials in the Learning Assistance Center.
3. Be able to demonstrate how to use the reading materials and lab equipment.
4. Be able to administer various kinds of diagnostic and achievement tests.
5. Be able to critique the various reading and study skills materials.
6. Be able to utilize the techniques, methods and procedures learned.
7. Be able to do ongoing diagnosis and prescription of reading skills.
8. Become cognizant of the various learning styles of the students and use this knowledge to help the students develop their skills.

COURSE CONTENT:

1. Nine learning modules
2. Videocassettes
3. Fourteen Remedial Reading Techniques by Thaddeus Trela

The videocassette mastery learning alternative course has an open enrollment which enables students to begin the course at any time during the semester. Students begin the course with an initial conference with the instructor to go over the course information sheet, to learn the location of the tests, videocassettes and linear materials and to learn the procedures to be followed. Students are to complete a pre-test before viewing the videocassette(s) or reading the accompanying linear materials. The pre-test has two purposes: (1) to determine the students who already have a sufficient understanding of a topic and therefore can skip that module and (2) to serve as a guide for viewing the videocassettes and reading the related materials. After completing the pre-test, the student places it in a folder where it is left for the instructor to check. The pre-test is checked within a day or two and the student then proceeds to view the videocassette(s) and read the linear material. If, after completing the pre-test, the student feels that the module should be completed, it is not necessary to wait until the pre-test has been checked before proceeding with the module. Upon completing the module, which includes one or more videocassettes as well as written materials, the student obtains the post-test from the Developmental Education Division secretary. The completed post-test is left in a folder for the instructor to correct. Students who score 80% or above may proceed to the next module. However, those who score below 80% are requested to study the materials again before taking an alternative post-test. In some cases, the instructor requests that the student schedule a conference to discuss the module before proceeding with the review.

When students complete all nine modules as well as all the course requirements, they meet with the instructor for the oral and written final exam. Credit is awarded at the end of the semester.

The nine modules in the tutor training course are listed below:

Module 1, Cassette I, Developmental Education Division Programs

Module 2, Cassette II, The Nature and Process of Reading, Part I
Module 2, Cassette III, The Nature and Process of Reading, Part II

Module 3, Cassette IV, Diagnosis and Diagnostic Teaching

Module 4, Cassette V, Beginning Reading Strategies, Part I
Module 4, Cassette VI, Beginning Reading Strategies, Part II

Module 5, Cassette VII, Word Analysis, Part I:
Context Clues
Structural Analysis
Dictionary Skills

Module 5, Cassette VIII, Word Analysis, Part II:
Phonics and Linguistic Patterns

Word Analysis Supplements
Four videocassettes describing vocabulary materials:
- Supplement A EDL Word Clues
- Supplement B Wordcraft
- Supplement C Craig VPR
- Supplement D Craig Roots

Module 6, Cassette IX, Comprehension

Module 7, Cassette X, Study Skills, Part I:
SQ3R
Memory Improvement
Concentration

Module 7, Cassette XI, Study Skills, Part II:
Test Desensitization
Purposeful Reading
Flexible Reading

Module 7, Cassette XII, Study Skills, Part III:
Skimming
Scanning
Speed
Library Skills

Module 7, Cassette XIII, Study Skills, Part IV:
Listening
Effective Notetaking

Module 8, Cassette XIV, Spelling

Module 9, Cassette XV, English as a Second Language

The cassettes which describe materials and equipment can be used by other students as well as student-tutors to learn how to use the materials and equipment. These videocassettes are also helpful to new instructors, paraprofessionals and visitors.

Additional modules are being developed to describe the learning disabilities program and materials; the basic math lab program; math anxiety reduction techniques; improving students self-concept; relaxation strategies and other methods of improving students' learning.

Student evaluations of the videocassette mastery learning course reveal that the flexible schedule afforded by the videocassette course was an advantage, but the lack of opportunity to question and discuss the concepts was, at times, a serious drawback for many. It seems, therefore, to be unwise to use a videocassette mastery learning course to replace a group instruction course. Instead, it should be used as an alternative for those who prefer an individualized approach or for those who enroll in the course after the semester is underway. It could also be used

by students who were absent from a lecture or by those who need to review concepts.

Another approach might be to combine small discussion groups with the videocassette lectures. The discussion groups would provide opportunities for feedback on the course content, for discussion of concepts and for demonstrations. The group sessions could be scheduled to meet the students' flexible schedules. As with most learning assistance courses, flexibility, creativity and responsiveness to students' needs should be the determining factors in tutor training.